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Book Reviews

BABYLONIA IN THE DYNASTIC PERIOD

In 1910, Professor King, the well-known decipherer of so many of the cuneiform treasures of the British Museum, issued the first volume of a history of Babylonia and Assyria under the title, *A History of Sumer and Akkad*. In this volume "an account was given of the early races of Babylonia from prehistoric times to the foundation of the monarchy. It closed at the point when the city of Babylon was about to secure the permanent leadership under her dynasty of West-Semitic kings." The second volume, issued in 1915,¹ "describes the fortunes of Babylonia during the whole of the dynastic period, and completes the history of the southern kingdom." The third volume will take up the history of Assyria.

At first sight it would seem as if a disproportionate share of the second volume had been given to the Hammurapi period, but, in order to avoid repetition, the author has intentionally passed somewhat hurriedly over the period of Assyrian domination over Babylonia. A fuller treatment of the period is promised in the third volume.

The choice of title for the second volume was a happy one. Certainly few cities ever made such an impression on the imagination of mankind as did Babylon. Babylon's place in the history of antiquity forms a fitting subject for the introductory chapter of this study.

Although the hands of the Assyrian kings fell heavily upon Babylon a number of times—we think at once of Sennacherib's destruction of the city in 689—the excavations on the site of the ancient city, in particular those conducted since 1899 by the Germans, have brought to light, not only the remains of the splendid neo-Babylonian city, but in part also those of the older settlements. When the archaeological materials thus recovered shall have been studied and made accessible, our knowledge of the material civilization of the Babylonians will be immeasurably increased. The results of these excavations, as far as they have been made available, have received most careful treatment in the second chapter.

After a discussion of chronological problems (chap. iii), King takes up the Western Semites and the First Dynasty of Babylon (chap. iv). For years Assyriologists assumed that the "Babylonian" culture was the product of the non-Semitic Sumerians, who were supposed to have occupied the land before the advent of the Semites. Winckler and others regarded them as

¹ *A History of Babylon*. By Léonard W. King. New York: F. A. Stokes Co., 1915. Pp. 340+xxiii.

altogether prehistoric. A study of the archaeological remains convinced Eduard Meyer that this theory was untenable, and that the Sumerians, so far from belonging to the prehistoric days, lived side by side with the Semites for at least a millennium of history. This first millennium of Babylonian history saw the Sumerians in the south and the Semites in the north struggling for the mastery of the Euphrates Valley. In the end the Semites gained the upper hand. In like manner, Meyer was able to show that the Semites contributed a goodly share to the civilization we usually call Babylonian. When and whence these two races entered the land is still uncertain. Another line of evidence, that of the personal names, enabled scholars to trace the progress of a wave of Semites from the "Westland" into the valley, a wave which seems to have begun to flow into Babylonia soon after 2500 B.C. By 2000 B.C. these "Amorites" had established a dynasty (the First Dynasty of Babylon, 2225-1926 B.C.), and were in control of most of Sumer and Akkad. What about the stage of culture of these invaders? To this question King devotes considerable attention.

"The Amurru, or Western Semites, to whose incursion into Babylonia the rise of Babylon itself was directly due, had long since abandoned a nomadic existence, and in addition to the higher standards of the agriculturist had acquired a civilization which had been largely influenced by that of Babylonia (p. 123)." According to the author this came about in the following way: early in the third millennium B.C., nomadic hordes from Arabia, probably induced by climatic conditions, left their steppes and pushed into Canaan, where they displaced a neolithic race. "After they had settled in Canaan and Syria they were known to the Babylonians as the *Amurru* or Amorites. They were taller and more vigorous than the neolithic Canaanites, and they seem to have brought with them a knowledge of the use of metal, acquired probably by traffic with southern Babylonia (p. 125)." That they revolutionized conditions of life in Canaan is evident from the excavations at Gezer and other Palestinian mounds. Along the great trade route up the course of the Euphrates, Babylonian influence traveled to Syria.

Although it is not put forward as such, this reconstruction of the early history of the West-Semites is, in the opinion of the reviewer, the best answer to the questions raised by Professor Clay in his *Amurru, the Home of the Northern Semites*. The question of the ultimate origin of the Babylonian civilization cannot be answered by etymologies alone, important as this line of evidence undoubtedly is, but will depend largely upon archaeology for its solution.

The chapter on the age of Hammurapi is the best in the book. For no other period of the history do we possess so many contemporaneous documents to illustrate the private and public life of the Babylonians. None of these documents was overlooked by the author.

In the concluding chapter there is given an estimate of the cultural influence of Babylonia upon Palestine and Greece. This is probably the

least satisfactory chapter in the book, not so much because of what it contains as because of what is omitted. Much more attention than is deserved is given to the astral theory of the pan-Babylonists. But perhaps a complete refutation of the claims of Winckler and his school was demanded from the pen of an English scholar. More space might have been given to tracing the influence of Babylonia upon Hebrew life and thought.

The book shows the evidence of long and intimate acquaintance with the sources, and is always interesting.

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THE CIVILIZATION OF BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

In a series of lectures delivered under the Richard B. Westbrook Lecture-ship Foundation at the Wagner Free Institute of Science, Philadelphia, and published with copious illustrations,¹ Professor Jastrow has made the first attempt "on a somewhat large scale to cover the entire subject of Babylonian Assyrian civilization for English readers." Two chapters (i and ii) on "Excavations" and "Decipherment" are followed by a "Survey of Babylonian and Assyrian History" (chap. iii). Chaps. iv and v are devoted to the "Gods of Babylonia and Assyria" and to the "Cults and Temples." "Law and Commerce" (chap. vi) and "Art" (chap. vii) are next taken up, and the survey is rounded out with a chapter (viii) of "Specimens of Babylonian and Assyrian Literature."

The author was well aware of the necessity of a careful selection of the materials to be presented in treating so large a subject and that in "such a selection personal judgment must inevitably be the guiding factor." At the outset we would register the opinion that the choice of topics was, on the whole, a happy one, and that a judicious selection, in the main, and a careful presentation of materials, has resulted successfully in affording the reader a general view of the civilization of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. It is a question, however, whether in this day of manuals and brief surveys of science, religion, philosophy, and what not, Semitic scholars are not defeating their own purpose, namely, to reach a larger audience, when they issue volumes of from five to six hundred pages at prices ranging from five to ten dollars. There certainly was no pressing need for the repetition, in the volume under discussion, of the story of the rediscovery of the remains of the Babylonian civilization, nor for that of the decipherment of the cuneiform, romantic as these stories are. However, these are matters of personal judgment.

The sketch of the history of Babylonia and Assyria, given in chap. iii, forms the real introduction to the subject treated in this book. And it is well

¹ *The Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria*. By Morris Jastrow, Jr. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1915. xxv+515 pages. \$6.00 net.